1900's

Events from Discover Gravesham Gravesend Chronology
www.discovergravesham.co.uk/gravesend-chronology, html [accessed 22.12.13]

1900 — The Association of Portland Cement Manufacturers (APCM) is founded from the combined cement factories which had become established at Greenhithe, Swanscombe and Northfleet

1901 — Queen Victoria dies Edward VII crowned King

Gravesend and Northfleet Tramways Ltd. is formed. Horse-drawn trams cease running to prepare for electrification. Reconstruction of tramway commences at Northfleet

1902 — Lord Mayor arrives in state to open Windmill Hill Pleasure Grounds, Gravesend

1903 — Gravesend Corporation accepts Andrew Carnegie's offer of £6,000 for a library building. Local subscribers purchased the site in Windmill Street and plans are approved by Carnegie the following year

1904

1905 — Gravesend Cemetery purchased by the corporation

Open air concerts commence on Windmill Hill in June

1906

1907

1908 — Olympic Games held in London

Thames Conservancy Board commenced legal proceedings against the Gravesend Corporation for permitting sewage to flow into the Thames

1909 — Old Age Pensions Act commences in January with 270 claims at Gravesend

Snow Carnival and tobogganing took place on Windmill Hill in March

Official opening of Gravesend's Mid Kent Golf Course in November by ex Prime Minister A.J. Balfour

1910

Lloyds Bank

George Clay Partnership

The firm's origins began with Adolphus C Rayner, 1841-1908, who moved from Leyton, east London to join his father William, a Master Builder in Gravesend, becoming W and AC Rayner, Builders.

By 1886 Adolphus was calling himself a surveyor, and had built an office in their builders yard in St James Road (the building remains but has been extended). Living close by in Darnley Road were three young men: LFL Bridgland (Auctioneer and Surveyor), AE Kidwell and George Edward Clay.

Bridgland and Kidwell went into partnership with Rayner, forming Rayner, Kidwell and Bridgland circa 1888. Kidwell left after 2 years, and in 1889 the co. was listed as Messrs Rayner & Bridgland *Architects, Surveyors, Auctioneers* co. at no. 16 New Road. Neither partner qualified as an architect (the Royal Institute of British Architecture qualifying examination was established in 1882), and it is not clear if the co. had any architects in their employ. If not then it would seem that the practice of misusing the title 'architect' has a long history.

George Edward Clay returned to Warrington, Lancashire to study for his RIBA qualifying examination, and qualified as an architect in 1899.

George E Clay

From a photo album of the Clay family

Documents show that George was an employee of Rayner & Bridgland during the early 1900s; that George kept records of designs attributed to Rayner & Bridgland dating to 1899 (the Terminus Hotel) suggest that he may have been the author of these designs and had been working for Rayner & Bridgland sometime during the late 1890s.

George left Rayner & Bridgland and set up his own practice in 1904 at 27 King Street. Ted Clifford, the practice historian writes 'he was very fond of one of Rayner's daughters, Kate, but her father was not in favour and Kate never married'. In 1907 the partnership between Rayner and Bridgland dissolved. Adolphus Rayner passed away on 27th October 1908. In 1907 Bridgland joined with George Edward Clay forming Bridgland & Clay, moving in next door in 1908 into the newly erected no. 28 King Street.

George E Clay

George once described Bridgland to Ted Clifford as a 'bullet headed, stiff built man'. In later years, he did not get on with George Edward Clay. Bridgland was more interested in surveying and auctioneering than in architecture, and was very much involved in The Gravesend Land Company. The firm were also agents for The Royal Insurance Company.

The partnership dissolved around 1926. George Edward Clay was trading under his own name by 1929, until 1944 when he retired.

George Edward's mother and father moved down from Warrington, Lancashire to live close to their son. George's mother Leah came from the Airdrie, Lanarkshire area of Scotland and was the daughter of the leading Engineer on the Forth Bridge Rail Bridge, William Inglis.

George Edward married Jessie, another scots lass and they had four children, George Inglis, John Arthur, William and Nell. George and John later qualified as architects (George Inglis at the Architectural Association, John at Cambridge and then the Architectural Association).

Ted writes:

'I had met George Edward and his family and in my opinion George took very much after his father in manner and ways, John and his sister after their mother, who was very nice.'

Both of the George Clays were very dominant personalities, they were not slow in informing you of what the situation was and their staff were very much on edge when dealing with them. They were also very fair, tell you off one moment and it was completely forgotten the next.'

Source: Ted Clifford, former associate

The Clay Family

The Clay Family

George Clay Partnership

Interior photo of Lloyds Bank

Exterior photo of Lloyds Bank

"On 25 October 1904 Capital & Counties Bank (est. 1877) opened a branch at 77A New Road, Gravesend. The site was owned by F J Tolhurst, a well-known local solicitor. He was proposing to have new offices built for himself. He suggested his architect, George E Clay, approach Capital & Counties to see whether they would be interested in opening a branch in the town and, if so, whether the building could be incorporated with his own project. The Directors of the bank approved the scheme and George Clay designed the premises. The building was in Gothic style, with a vaulted roof, leaded windows and oak panelling. Many people, on entering the branch for the first time, enquired as to whether it had once been a church. The bank decided to adopt the same style of architecture for all its new offices opened in that part of the country.

In 1918 Capital & Counties was absorbed by Lloyds Bank. In 1961/62 alterations and extensions were carried out at the branch. The character of the original building was retained.

In June 1973 the branch moved to temporary premises at 195 Parrock Street, whilst the New Road premises were rebuilt. In March 1975 it returned to its former site, renumbered 78 New Road. The new premises were part of a £3.5million shopping development, and the bank was one of the first three tenants in what was known as the Anglesea Centre. The outside walls of the branch were faced with black granite and contrasting stainless steel panels to emphasise the bank's black horse motif. The architects were Peter Beake, Buckler & Partners, and the general contractors were A E Symes Limited. The interior of the banking hall was lined with laminate board, with a suspended ceiling at two levels. The counters and fittings were finished in white melamine, and the main cashiers run had a bronze coloured glass frontage below the counter top.

In September 1975 a Cashpoint machine was installed at the branch. On 11 October 1999 the branch merged with the former TSB 45 New Road branch in the former Lloyds premises."

Text and images courtesy of Lloyds Banking Group Archives

George Clay Partnership

Bridgland

George E Clay

George E Clay employed by Rayner & Bridgland Architects, Surveyors Co. at no. 16 New Road Gravesend

George E Clay, born 19th May 1875

1904 — George E. Clay leaves Rayner & Bridgland to set up George E Clay ARIBA Architect and Surveyor on 27 Kings Street, Gravesend

1907 — Bridgland moves to 28 King Street and joins with George E Clay

Forming Bridgland & Clay

1908 — Adolphus Rayner Jnr. passes away October 1908